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SEP 10 2001

Subject: Yucca Mountain hearings mishandled

Part of Records Package / Supplement / Correction

Dear Ms. Hanlon:

I am writing to express my displeasure with the Department of Energy's handling of the September 5th public hearing on the Yucca Mountain proposal. It seems to me that the DOE used a combination of various tactics to prevent those opposed to the Yucca project from speaking their minds effectively.

To begin with, the public should have had more than the give nine business days notice before a hearing on such a crucial matter. Secondly, by holding the hearing in a facility that lies on an industrial road outside Las Vegas and far from public transportation, the DOE purposely made it more difficult than necessary for many Nevada residents to attend the hearing at all. I cannot believe that the location was chosen on the basis of necessity, as there are in Las Vegas a number of venues that would have been not only more accessible, but better equipped to accommodate the number of people who had (and have) opinions on this major issue. What is more, when the DOE changed the location of the hearing, an incorrect address was listed on public notices for the new hearing location. Even if this inaccuracy was unintentional, it smacks of a cavalier attitude on the DOE's part towards a project that could affect nearly all American citizens adversely.

Finally, and most inexcusably, many citizens opposed to the Yucca Mountain project were denied the opportunity to voice their opposition on the grounds that they had not registered to speak ahead of time. If, however, it is the DOE's policy that speakers at public hearings must register ahead of time, it is only common fairness that the DOE give people who represent both sides of the controversy equal opportunity and ability to register. In this case, none of the public notices gave Nevada citizens any idea that they were expected to register ahead of time, but those who favored proceeding with the Yucca project somehow did know that they had to register.

All of these underhanded maneuvers were undemocratic, to say the least. The lives of residents of Nevada are at stake here, as they stand to find themselves living dangerously close to nuclear waste within the next decade. It is unconscionable they were not even allowed to express their views, and rigged public hearings such as the one held September 5th make a mockery of America's stated commitment to freedom of expression. Furthermore, by hiding the Yucca Mountain from so much of the public, the DOE is bringing down its own reputation and that of the nuclear industry, sending out strong signals that both have something to hide. Although there are still serious questions about the ability of Yucca to contain nuclear waste, the DOE claims to believe that a waste storage site in Nevada would be a good thing - a solution to the problem of where to store nuclear waste. Yet, if the project is beneficial to the American people, why is it being hid from them? The aura of secrecy surrounding this project and the DOE's failure to handle site evaluation objectively only serve to give credence to the opinions of those who accuse the DOE of a reckless disregard for public safety and those who consider the project flawed, biased in industry's favor, and dangerous.

Thank you for reading my comments. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

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